(a) what is the rating of performance of Indian INSAS 5.5 rifles; and

(b) if this rifle is good enough, what are the reasons for delay in supplying it to armed forces?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI HARIN PATHAK): (a) and (b) INSAS 5.56mm Rifle produced in Ordnance Factories has been accepted by the Army after extensive trials. Its performance has been found to be very satisfactory. There has been no delay in supplying the rifles to armed forces and supplies are being effected as per the agreed annual programme. Nearly three lakh Nos. of INSAS 5.56mm Rifles have been supplied to Army till 1999- 2000. Army has projected a demand for supply of 80,000 Nos. during 2000-2001 which is expected to be met by the Ordnance Factories.

Purchase of AJT Aircraft

327. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to purchase Advanced Jet Trainer aircraft from Britain; and

(b) while proceeding with this proposal whether Government have kept in view the U.S. embargo and extraordinary delay in the repair of Sea Harrier and Sea King Helicopters?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

Tribunal for Armed Forces

328. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Law Commission in its 169th report had recommended for establishment of a Tribunal to deal with the problems and grievances of the service personnel of the three wings of the Armed Forces;

(b) if so, whether Government have accepted the recommendation and if so, by when the aforesaid Tribunal is likely to be set up; and

(c) whether establishment of the Tribunal is likely to bar the jurisdiction of the law courts with regard to the service grievances of the members of the Armed Forces?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The recommendations of the Law Commission have been considered and the Government has agreed in principle to set up an Armed Forces Tribunal for hearing appeals against orders of Court Martials and for adjudication of service matters of Armed Forces personnel. A Bill seeking to set up the Tribunal is being finalised.

(c) Establishment of a Tribunal does not bar the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Steps to prevent another Kargil like situation

329. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item under the caption 'Pak preparing for another Kargil? New Militant outfit being formed' which was published in the "News Times" dated the 17th June, 2000;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) whether Government would take any concrete steps to prevent another Kargil like conflict this year and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) All appropriate measures have been taken to thwart Pak designs. Our troops are well equipped, prepared and motivated to meet any eventuality.

POWs in Pak Jails

330. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 54 of our defence officers and men are rotting in Pakistan jails for the past 28 years;

(b) whether the issue of release of POWs was discussed during the recent visit of the group from the Human Rights Commission from Pakistan;

(c) if so, what have been the outcome thereof; and

(d) what positive steps are being taken to see that the POWs are returned to India at the earliest possible?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d)